(b) the number of airports that have been improved out of the total airports taken up for improvement;

(c) the number of airports that are still to be improved; and

(d) the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) and (b) Airports Authority of India (AAI) has taken up improvement of nine airports at Lilabari, Tezpur, Agartala, Imphal, Dimapur, Silchar, Dibrugarh, Shillong and Guwahati in the North Eastern Region in coordination with North East Council (NEC). Of these, improvement works at Tezpur, Agartala and Imphal airports have been completed. These airports are now suitable for operation of A-320/B-738 type of aircraft in instrumental weather condition (IMC).

(c) and (d) Improvement works at remaining six airports shall be taken up during 2005-06 and completed during Tenth Five Year Plan. Improvement works include extension of runway upto 7500 feet to make them suitable for A-320 operations and provision of more parking stands at Silchar and Dibrugarh airports; provision of new terminal buidlings at Shillong and Dibrugarh airports; installation of Instrument Landing Systems at Silchar, Lilabari and Dimapur airports and provision of two passenger boarding bridges and canopy on city side at Guwahati airport.

Tout menance at IGI Airport

*131. SHRIMATI HEMA MALINI: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are aware of continuing tout menace at IGI Airport and also the nuisance of loaders stealing articles from the baggages of passengers, especially foreigners, thus tarnishing the image of the country;

(b) the number of tout problems and theft cases reported to the authorities during the last three months at IGI Airport;

(c) whether Government are taking any preventive steps in this regard; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) During the last three months, a total of 771 touts were apprehended and 14 cases of theft reported.

(c) and (d) Several measures have been taken to curb touts at airports. Local Police and CISF Anti-Tout Cell established by CISF personnel keep vigil to curb possible malpractices by taxi drivers. There is constant monitoring by Terminal Management personnel and surprise inspections by Airports Authority of India (AAI) executives. Surveillance on city side of the terminal buildings has been increased through CCTVs. The amount of fine has also been increased and passengers are educated against falling prey to such touts.

Safety audit of low-cost airlines

*132. SHRIMATI N.P. DURGA: Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) whether the DGCA has received any representation from the Air Passengers Association of India appealing to conduct a safety audit on the low-cost airlines;

(b) if so, the details of the representation received and the action that has been contemplated or proposed to be contemplated by the DGCA;

(c) whether the regulatory authority has ever taken notice of this; and

(d) if so, what steps have been taken by the authority so far on the safety audit of the low-cost airlines?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI PRAFUL PATEL): (a) No, Sir.

(b) to (d) Do not arise. However, DGCA carries out Safety Audits of Airlines Operators including low-cost airlines from time to time. In the last three years, 32 safety audits of 25 organisations, which includes scheduled, non-scheduled, private and Government organisation have been carried out by DGCA.